

## INSURANCE STAMP PERFORATIONS by DAVE HILL.

Sloper's records refer to the perforation of insurance stamps. In their earliest ledger there is a column set aside for this but there are few entries. In the second ledger there are many number perfins and ballot machine perfins. To explain, a ballot machine has a square of pins which are removable. Say there were 10 pins by 10 pins, this would I think, give 100 possible permutations of pin pattern. It is difficult to tell the difference between these ballot machine perfins. We can all identify the letters of the alphabet or numbers but meaningless patterns of pins are more difficult.

In this second ledger the patterns are mostly symmetrical but in Sloper's latest ledger there are more and they are less symmetrical. Incidentally in Sloper's records of employees there are some shown working solely on ballot machines, perhaps it was their job to produce these perfins.

When I first saw the latest ledger I was struck by the many numeral perfins in the insurance column and it was tempting to claim these as new identities even when most are unknown on postage stamps. I have now found examples of the ballot machine perfins on National Insurance Stamps from the 1970's although we have been unable to identify the user. I have also part of a stamped card which has been perforated all over to cancel it. Sloper's made similar machines or it may have been made by Grover of East London.

Another interesting sideline is the actual perforations used to separate the stamps. If you look closely you can see a crescent shaped gap in the perforation midway along each side, presumably this made them easier to separate. Apparently this type of perforation is used on the latest high value postage stamps.



I hope to obtain examples of the numeral perfins on earlier insurance stamps to complete our understanding of this part of the Sloper records.

Finally in Sloper's records of machines sold I have found what might be the original of these perfins. Machine number 65189 was supplied in 1932 to George Wimpey the builders and was a pattern of five pins in a dog leg. The book says "Specimen followed exactly as has been approved by the Ministry of Health. Holes not to be larger than those dividing sheets of Health stamps. Capable of perforating Health and Unemployment Stamps."